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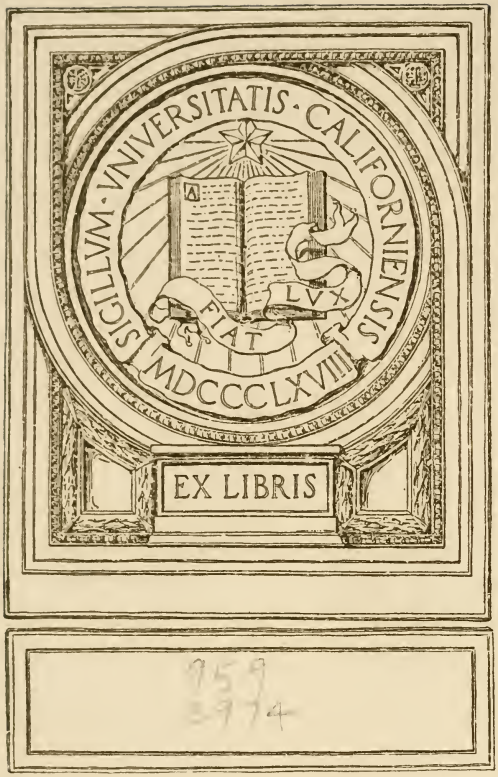
THE WILD ORCHARD

ELINOR SWEETMAN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THE WILD ORCHARD

By

ELINOR SWEETMAN

LONDON
HERBERT & DANIEL
21 MADDOX STREET
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Preface

NOTHING that I can say is worth the fact that the sweetest writer on nature of our days, he who came to us from the Pampa (*muy buena, Pampa*, as the Indian said), appreciates the work of her for whom I pen these lines.

He who could write the London Sparrow, must of necessity be in full sympathy with sweet and gentle minds.

When I received these verses, there came a letter with them, saying, that the writer feared her little garden would be unworthy of the gate.

I answered, and I feel that the rude gate will repel those who might have loved to stray amongst the flowers.

There is something in the garden that reminds me of Melendez and something of that spirit of the Middle Ages, a quality often to be discerned in Catholics, who seem to have inherited more of the spirit of the past, than those for whom John Calvin offered up the life of poor Servetus,

to make them equal in intolerance with their brethren of Rome.

In distant places, camped on a stream, or on the edge of some Estero far away in Paraguay, occasionally I have found myself the possessor but of one book.

Often it has been a book of poetry, why I cannot tell, perhaps because it was the only book procurable in the estancia where I borrowed it, perhaps because as poetry is more condensed than prose, in such a place the pleasure lasts the longer, or perhaps because round the camp fire, poetry is easier to read aloud.

Well, well, the world is an Estero, and in the camping places upon its dreary banks, to have a book of poems in which simple but heartfelt verses such as " The Faun " and the " Epiphany " are found, help one to face the knowledge that next day the march will be as long as yesterday, with mud and water up to the horse's knees.

R. B. Cunninghame Graham.

THE WILD ORCHARD

The Wild Orchard

This is the wildness of the orchard—this
The magic of its unpruned apple-sticks,
That here all winds and freest essences
Blow through ; and weeds and flowers intermix.
Here noontide green still holdeth grey of dawn,
From arborescence gnarled and overgrown ;
Here, where small stars of savage flavour kiss,
Like a rose-moon some queen of perfume pricks.
And whether April virginally robe her
All in pearl-white, or, as the seasons pass,
Autumn's ripe daughter, tawny-tressed October
Tumble her rosy apples on the grass,
Here flock the little homeless Pans that sober
Earth hath scared forth from iron and from bricks.

To the tall cherry and the woodland plum,
The secret rose, and berries of the heath,
The broken music of the world flies home,
Builds in their boughs, or pipeth underneath.
Matters not what the graft or whence the seed,
Or which is blossom here, or which is weed—
All, all are natural sacraments, and come
Out of sweet earth with healing in their breath.
On all wild virtue rests, and mysteries fall,
All are baptised in fire, all sons of honey,
All feel upliftings of the light, and all
Watch as it sets in flame and splendours many
A wild-haired host of shapes processional
Riding the flying glory to its death.

O the wild orchard! Home of rushing wings,
Of visions, houseless dream and hunted song—
Here a free bird of joy for ever flings
Melodies gathered when the world was young.
Here earth's small dancing sweetness, unafraid,
Flutes to the wayfarer in fruited shade;
Bidding the never-neverness of things
Fade from his spirit, and his heart grow strong.
Here let us leave cold disillusionings;
In some such garden life was first made fair;
And still in goblin-gold and fairy-bell,
And in the frailest cup that blows in air,
And unto every leafy sentinel
That weaves the stars within its matted hair,
Some hidden wine of paradise may dwell—
Something of primal sanctity belong.

THE FAUN

The Faun

From the Marble of Frémiet in the Musée du Luxembourg

(The slender winding streamlet from the height,
Born of dim mist and clouds in mountain flocks,
Child of the snow ; with ever-new delight
Tumbling its loosened silver o'er the rocks ;
Where does it cease its song and sparkle ?—where
Its long illimitable laughter cease ?
The great tides called within their Ocean lair
And their voice lured it from its home of peace.)

* * * * * *

It was a faun among the flowering rushes,
Careless as they, and pliant to the wind ;
A little impish faun ;—the bee that crushes
Honey from thyme, or flutters half entwined
In the warm rose upon the wild rose-bushes,
Lies on their petals scarce more airily
Than in his green and mossy nook did he.

Half child, half goat he seemed—his pointed ears
Grown long from listening to the ground, were hid
By a green wreath yet moist with morning's tears ;
His reedy pipe from one small hand had slid,
And lay half-buried in the tall rush-spears
That swayed above it, as though music wild
Still the dim currents of their lives beguiled.

O music of the faun, unearthly sweet !—
What human thought can gauge its honied lore,
Or disentangle dream by dream, or beat
By beat again, the passion at its core !
Unto what porch of joy doth it entreat
The fluttering spirit—what unuttered things
Live briefly in its sylvan whisperings !

O haunting voice ! enchanting melody
That bids by night the nightingale be still,
Shamed by a song so witching !—and a cry
Sends up at dawn to wake the early hill
With the first golden trumpet in the sky,
So tunefully, that flowers at sunrise
Hold nectared drops within their innocent eyes !

But now warm noon lay silent as a dream
Over the woods, and e'en the flocks were dumb
In mountain-pasture ; mist and summer beam
Veiled the sweet hills like bloom upon a plum.
The pipes of Pan were hushed beside the stream,
And yet he slept not, nor would sleep allow
In the green world beneath his beechen-bough.

Some hidden wine of life he seemed to sup
Out of his thoughts ; for sure a freakish whim
Bade the slight corners of his lip curl up,
And in his half-closed eyes the light o'erbrim ;
His little body all too frail a cup
For the wild glee that shook it would appear,
As in his hand he poised a reedy spear.

A cold spring ran beneath him, and his laughter
Chimed to its tinkle like a peal of bells
Magic in discord ;—all the joy that after
Youth dances, and in roguish childhood dwells,
Through his voice bubbling made the echoes dafter
Where, madly gay, from crag to crag again
They rang, out-drowning undercries of pain.

For lo ! two paces from his mossy bed,
A brace of little bears had crept at dawn,
And to his pipes inclined each foolish head,
Till slumber claimed them on the noonday lawn.
And the faun watched, and now by mischief led
Pricked them awake, and bade each bearling leap
From the long spear that pierced its helpless sleep.

Poor bits of fur ! At first they deemed 'twas play,
Danced at the goad, and gazed with trusting eyes
Into the faun's, where gleamed a baffling ray.
Then cried they sore with pain and with surprise
As the sharp reed-point tore the hide away,
And tumbled cowering, when a wicked thrust
Forced their hot tears to mix with blood and dust.

Then the great dam of both these tender things
Came and reproached the faun : " Thou piping lord,
Thou woodland prince, to whom each creature brings
Its store of nuts or honey as reward ;—
Why dost thou now chastise our ministerings ?

The forest loves thee as its dearest bliss,
Why art thou wrath ?—what hath it done amiss ? "

But the wild faun took up his pipes and played
Awhile in silence. From his alien glance
The humble forest beast shrank back dismayed,
And his warm face of joy beheld askance ;
Yet the sweet pipes a spell upon her laid.
And the faun laughed again : " O Bear," quoth he,
" I pricked thy nest to make it dance for me ! "

* * * * * *

(*Unto the river now hath fled the stream,*
And now the river hurries to the sea ;
And with it hurries night and clouds that seem
To close upon a sense of tragedy.
Past the long harbour and the lights it raves—
Past the tall buildings, and the crowded docks—
Eager for Ocean, where the plunging waves
Feed with fierce milk a brood of hungry rocks.
And tempest follows, dark, of mighty breath ;
And there in sight of shore, in reach of port,
I saw a good ship labouring to her death.
And there was clamour—wind and sound of bells,
As of a great heart tolling its own knells,
While the sea licked about her sides in sport.
And as I watched, the bells rang out again
With a wild sobbing, weary of their pain,
And died away, and the ship tempest-tossed
Sent up a cry—and all aboard were lost.)

THE DANCERS

The Dancers

Thus hath Iacchus dreamed.
He in forgotten hills beneath the pine,
On the warm ledges of the vineyard lies,
Steeped in a thousand wild felicities.
One drowsy hand the wine-cup and the wine
Spills heedless, crimsoning a stream that flies
Out of the mountain gorges, foamy-creamed ;
And, in return, the movement of the flood
Leaps like sweet water in his leaping blood.
Joyous he nods, and therewith nods the vine
Banded above his purple-lidded eyes ;
And vine-leaves green, and wreathèd ivy-twine
Fling their gay dancing shadows on his mood.
Thus hath Iacchus dreamed.

Iacchus, prone among forest roots—
Iacchus, filled with the falling water—
From the vine that in Spring sends forth her shoots,
Nurslings of sun where the sun hath sought her—
Strong and graceful, children of wind,
With young limbs dancing and intertwined—
Iacchus, lord of the vine and her fruits,
Bids ye come forth, O son and daughter !

But first drink deep in this heart of mine
That ever to joy is open wide

As the chalice of laughing flowers to the shine
Of the sun-god, high in his noonday pride.
Drink—be ye drunken with honey and sun,
With mountain-odours, and winds that run
Through the resinous places where sap like wine
Rising, makes fragrant the warm wood-side.

Then swift—become man and maid—take shape—
Dance ye down with the shadows of leaves,
Maze within maze, as the maze of the grape
On the floor of the vineyard her pattern weaves.
With bliss inebriate whirl ye forth ;
Teach ye the heart of a saddened earth,
While your wreaths are loosened, your locks escape,
What the heart of a god from the grape conceives.

Hence, twin-begotten !—but thou, O youth,
As the pine that nursed thee be supple and strong ;
The maid is supple—be strong for both,
Catching her slenderness do it no wrong.
As wind on the hills of Arcady tosses
Fir-boughs over the mountain-mosses
Up to the fir-tree's uttermost growth,
Toss her up lightly, and lift her along.

Remember the bounding streams that rift
Grey gorges wild on the heights of dawn ;—
How they leap till the flower of foam and drift
To their tireless heart once more is drawn !

Remember the hills !—If the maiden scorning
Flies like a dove from the gates of morning,
Follow her ;—be as a hunter swift
Upon the flying feet of the fawn.

And daughter—thou, who from earliest days
Wert exquisite, nursed on exquisite things
In places of dream—on dew and rays
Of a delicate sun by the silver springs ;—
Thou too hast tasted the grape and its fire ;
Be subtle, be sweet, be swift to inspire ;
But ever elusive, as wind in the maze
Eludes who follows on earthlier wings.

Evade him ; yet if in fortunate hour
His hands should flutter thy vesture's hem,
Yield—be fluctuant—let their power
Poise thee heavenwards, trust to them.
Flutter his heart with thy happy breathing ;
Dance—let thy limbs with his dance enwreathing
Lace it with beauty, as vines in flower
Lace their light tendrils about a stem.

Dance, O ye children ! Your feet come waking
The morning glory,—come, lift your faces,
Laugh ;—let his garb as of one forsaking
The wine-press trodden in purpling places
Be scant and crimson ; and hers of mist
Where the dawn strikes through ; or amethyst
As of the crocus that young maids breaking
Give to their shepherds with light embraces.

Be robed in beauty. The gods are nude,
The gods are tireless, the gods are free.
Dance untrammelled and unsubdued ;
Heaven is splendour, and earth is glee.
Let your glad eyes the world disown,
For a jealous world sucks gladness down,
And broods immortal and mortal brood
Drowns in the waves of her dreary sea.

Look on the hills. Let your glances lifting
Rest on the everlasting peaks.
There are the snows, and there the drifting
Dance of the stars before sunrise breaks.
There were ye cradled in music. Pan
By the clear stream's fresh green marges ran,
And cut the sedges whose sweet and shifting
Voice in the pastoral reed-pipe speaks.

Follow—yea, follow his music, moulding
Body and soul to that long-lost strain
Born of the whispers of leaves unfolding,
Of songs of the nymphs, and of falling rain.
Be your eyes raised up to the mountain portal—
Your ears to the bubbling of springs immortal—
So shall the weary world beholding,
Think on the ancient gods again.

RHŒCUS

Rhœcus

In olden days of Greek delight,
Near city walls a garden was,
Wherein one lying out of sight

Beneath the boughs on summer days,
Might deem the blinding radiance shone
Through flakes of clear green chrysopras ;—

So hot the burning outer sun,
So thick enlaced, so pure in blood,
The warm sweet leaves it smote upon.

In deepest of this fruitful wood,
From humming pathways far withdrawn,
A tree of ripening apples stood

Midway upon an inner lawn.
And hither with the languid noon,
Or earlier with dews of dawn,

Or when a balmy golden moon
Glimmered like fruit behind the boughs,
Young Rhœcus came ;—the full-leaved June

Made surge and storm about his house,
And filled its marble colonnade
With melody tumultuous.

And ever as he slept, or made
Libation at the vine's green feet,
Or wrestled in the games, or stayed

His steps upon the busy street,
These chantings of an outland tongue
Troubled his soul like music sweet.

Not all unmarked he moved along ;
Men watched his rapt majestic air.
He knew the gods had made him strong—

Men said the gods had made him fair.
Cold sanctities by sculptors formed
Still keep his rings of wreathen hair,

His brow, his lip—but all that charmed
Yet more such beauty-loving race :
Splendour of feature passion-warmed,

And pallid fervours of the face—
These live no more, these lie inurned
In Rhœcus' long-lost burial-place.

He knew not of the rose that burned
In women's faces as he stept ;
Nor guessed at lives from which he turned

Incurious, yet whose fibres leapt
Beneath those eyes' abstracted fire,
As though a master-hand had swept

The utmost compass of a lyre ;
No, no, the voice that charmed his days
And filled his spirit with desire

Was borne from green and wooded ways,
Wild path and solitary field ;
With dew and scent and goatherd's lays,

And winds that sang of earth unveiled—
Earth waiting as a bride may wait
For one who is divinely sealed

Her lover and her consecrate.
This fired his mood, this lent his years
A majesty of mystic fate,

This mastered him. When youthful peers
Crowned him with parsley or with bay,
The live leaves rustling round his ears

Became as wings to speed the way
Where bloomed the boughs he loved. O there
Prone in his bower of dream he lay,

With wreath uncinct, and temples bare,
And drank the fragrance of the ground.
Then soft as strands of woman's hair

Would sprays of apple wind him round,
To bind him unto Nature's breast ;
Till, plunged in extasy profound,

And with divinest madness pressed,
His being slipped its mortal form
To merge itself in living dust.

His veins were quick, his eyelids warm,
His lordless body breathed in trance,
The soul disprisoned rode the storm,

Or joined with grasses in their dance,
And blindly felt amid the green
What baffles human utterance—

Hints of a presence all unseen,
And touches like a dream-caress
That spurred perception over-keen

Until the brink of happiness,
But faded into Nature's vast,
Ere he might name it, or possess.

One fateful day when vision past
Made life loom blanker than the wall
Whose firelit doors are bolted fast,

He woke and cried : " Can this be all ?
And shall I never wring from fate
That something sweet and personal

" For which mine ardent senses wait ?
Come, come, reveal thyself to me,
O thou most dear—most intimate—

" Yet most unknown ! "—Behold the tree
Swayed like a startled woman-thing
From him who pleaded, but when he

Undaunted clasped it, gathering
The flexuous limbs in his embrace,
Brake into flowers of the Spring ;

And out of flowers dawned a face
Fruit-shaped, fruit-tinted, blossom-fair,
Through lattice of green interlace,

And made a summer glory there.
A Dryad—born of that wild brood
Which Nature to Olympus bare,

And blending in her happy blood
Part ichor of immortal veins,
And part the sap that makes the wood,

And life from dew and moss distrains.
A Dryad, in whose tresses wreathed,
High as the runner's that attains,

Beat Rhœcus' heart. " Hail ! rose unsheathed
At last," he prayed ; " Hail ! flower and bride."
A voice like melody low-breathed,

" O gatherer of dreams ! " replied,
" Forego this hour ; thou shalt return
When evening droopeth amber-eyed

" To kiss her hills, and cattle spurn
With homing feet the mountain sod ;—
At sunset come, if thou wouldst learn

" How loves the daughter of a god."
She ceased ; a thousand jealousies
Stirred green in every apple-rod

That rising, lashed at Rhœcus' eyes
To beat him back, lest he unfurl
Its frail defences from his prize.

Close-set they struck ; if now a curl
Blown outward, gilt the sapling whips,
Or now a limb of lucid pearl

Gleamed swift, more swift withdrawn, and lips
Like wind-blown flowers eluded his,
Too soon in verdurous eclipse

Was beauty veiled, and of his bliss
Remained the forest-voice alone,
Muttering enormous messages,

Leaf-syllabled in undertone,
To warn him thence. Unwillingly
He wandered forth ; 'twas afternoon ;

Like drops of honey golden sky
And golden land were blent in light ;
Time faint with sweetness could not fly,

And all too slowly promised night.
It was the hour when city youth
Light-heeled as Hermes taking flight,

Escaped from parching dust and drouth,
And sandals of the citizen
Set towards the fields. What turn uncouth

Of Fortune's wheel brought Rhœcus then,
Still chafed with delicate dislikes
To earth, on these his fellow-men ?

Their laughing words like arrow-spikes
His rose of bliss assailed from far ;
" Ho, Rhœcus ! Ever more he strikes

" On earth, who aimeth at a star ! "
Then friends pressed up : " Be not so nice ;
Fate mocks at those who scornful are.

" Come, join our sports, and throw the dice ;
We'll play thee for these dreams of thine,
Before the evening sacrifice."—

To Greek of old all things divine
Were shadowed forth in omens dim ;
And like an utterance Sybilline

Chance words foreboding ring to him
Who with the mystic future toys.
So Rhœcus felt, and by this whim

Inspired, stood still. The laughing boys
Silenced, he took the cup and tossed
For augury of secret joys.

Three times he threw and three times lost,
But on his failure breathed disdain.
It could not be that Fortune crossed

Such holy love—He threw again.
Youths clustered round whose garments drank
Deeply the hoar dew's pallid stain ;

O'er Rhœcus' temples clustered dank
His heavy locks, and still his hand
Threw down the fateful baubles blank.

There came a movement o'er the land
Of flocks led home, while swaying boughs
Rocked the dim earth to rest ; a wand

Of weeping green the lover's brows
Kissed tenderly ; he paid no heed ;
Anon a bee droned by to rouse

Ears once so keen, but with all speed
Flew frightened thence ; last drooping light
Pressed tremblingly as one in need

A tender presence rosy-bright
Against his breast ; there swooned away.
He heard not, saw not, felt not—sight,

Sense, hearing—all were lost in play.
Like shapes fast stiffening into frost
The gamblers sate—so hushed were they,

When lo ! a silver echo tossed
From wild reverberate headlands thrice,
Proclaiming that the game was lost,

Brake through the lover's mood of ice :—
Pan's reed-pipes bidding none forget
The dusk midsummer sacrifice !

O then what madness of regret
Stung Rhœcus ; with what anguished eyes
He stared at Heaven—the sun was set,

Set on ungathered extasies ;
And not the gods themselves entreat
Men's vanished opportunities.

Blind gleaner of Elysian wheat,
And listener at the heavenly door !
Ah ! whither shall he go, whose feet

Are strangers on our human shore ?
He flies, the blood in courses wroth
Through all its currents bubbles o'er,

Thick-troubled like a fierce hell-broth.
He flies ; and shapes of fever born
Crowd suddenly the forest growth,

To race him down ; from gnarlèd thorn
Mis-shapen satyrs covert break,
And every bush grows hoof and horn

To toss and trample in his wake,
With here a stamp, and there a nod,
And laughter that doth madness make.

Behold at last the blest abode—
Now might sweet tears of pardon fall—
No, no—the passage of a god

Incensed, hath been and murdered all.
Here stands the tree of joys bereft :
Fresh leaves, green boughs, and apple-ball

Lie bruised around ; the bole is cleft—
Sweet, dewy, delicate in death,
But of its soul is nothing left.

Ah ! Rhœcus, here, with trembling breath,
For thee a Dryad lifted veil ;
And here, since antique legend saith

No more, must end a piteous tale.
O here among the flowers she stept,
Like Venus on her foam-wreath pale,

Here palpitated, watched, and wept,
All rosed with love and shyness blent,
Or fluttered with sweet discontent,

Till forth the lynx-eyed satyrs crept,
And dragged her thence to punishment.

And what of Rhœcus ?—Him, the young,
The famed, and glorious ?—Shall he
Die now in echoes of old song

Blown hitherward from Thessaly ?
Aye, surely is he dead, but not
In youth might cross the Stygian sea ;

That were for him who once forgot
A tryst with pure immortal love,
Too tragically sweet a lot.

Slow, slow doth heavenly vengeance move
Through elemental powers ;—who knows
If, in the end, Jove's lightning prove

Sharper than great Pan's wilding rose ?
Pan, keeper of the leafy years,
Beats many a sinner down with those.

Life harvested of hopes and fears—
Mere stubblefield !—Who hath not seen
When past some classic coast he steers,

Stones of forgotten beauty, green
And mouldering into earth's decay ?
Some moss-encrusted Proserpine,

Or Hermes drenched in ocean-spray ;
Where dust of seas and wind wears thin,
Breaks, blotches, blinds, and eats away

The brow, the bosom, and the chin ?
Not thus was beauty to say truth
Deformed in Rhœcus ; but within,

His spirit checked of eager growth,
Grew daily stunted, maimed and old.
Rhœcus, the well-beloved youth,

Once like the sun-god to behold,
Who might have braced on brow and limb
Apollo's bays and harp of gold—

Bearer of light to alleys dim,
Such radiance of the virgin earth
His presence brought !—Ah ! not like him

The later Rhœcus wandered forth.
But as that other deity,
Divine Apollo's twin at birth,

And shadow, ever hovering nigh,
Whom ye may view on graven tombs,
A sad yet beauteous effigy,

So Rhœcus came. Warm summer-blooms
Grew cold beneath his feet, and white,
Like those we strew in charnel-rooms ;

The joyous heart put out its light
Beholding him ; and none but guessed
The presence of a secret blight.

And he, himself, with pulseless breast
Could see the morning glory rise,
The moving seasons, and the rest

Of all great nature's mysteries.
From dawn to dusk he passed across,
Unstirred by aught that lives or dies,

A dark impassive Thanatos,
With torch reversed, and in the eyes
Sense of irrevocable loss.

THE LOVERS' BREVIARY

The Lovers' Breviary

. . . The star-grass by the wave
Sang me these songs at even.

O ye to whom awhile was given
Beneath those whispering trees to stand,
By the wild spring whose impulse drave
Four rivers wild through Edenland ;

Remembering now that time of dream,
And how your heart-strings, ere ye wist,
Became as harps to one wild theme,
And every mood a melodist ;—

How in those fields of flower and bliss,
Where Eve and Adam once were rovers,
Ye caught at strains—now hers, now his,
And now the dim Eternal Lover's ;

Lend me your ears. Let your own lays
On these song-shadows flutter by,
Brief-winged. Short, short are lovers' days—
Short is the Lovers' Breviary.

For O who knows ?—If Matins gave
Hymns like the morning lark's in heaven,
Lauds may be loud above a grave,
Or Vespers clang of things bereaven ;

Or life's irrevocable word,
'Twixt Eden and the outer-driven,
Wait like the angel's flaming sword.
Who knows ? . . .

The star-grass by the wave
Sang me these songs at even.

AT MATINS I

Joy, the melody-maker, through mine April winging,
Furled a fickle pinion, rested him from flight ;
Joy with rush and ripple through my boughs of apple—
Joy, the melody-maker, set my days a-singing,
Set my life vibrating, as the branches swinging
Where the birds alight !

O, the melody-making—O, the music breaking
Through the life and laughter of an April light !
O, the song and clamour leaving tuneful tremor !
Joy, the melody-making, ere my life forsaking,
Joy hath taught me music—still the boughs are shaking
Where he stayed his flight !

AT MATINS II

To Love the Wanderer

All that Spring gives and all that she withholds
Art thou,
Who comest as the wine within the bough,
The breath of woods ere yet the leaf unfolds,
The hope of fields newborn and flower-faint.
Wild with all wildness, virginally free,
Thou art at once both impulse and restraint,
Holding the promise of full things to be.
Not thine the rapture of green worlds of joy
Rising to song, as in dim ages Troy
Was harped by unseen minstrels from the sea ;
If thou hast heard
The secret things lisped by the bird of dawn
Deep in its dewy mysteries withdrawn,
Yet art thou less
The voice of April and her hidden bird,
Than her most rare, most exquisite silences.
O Riddle ! how then dost thou call us—how
Draw the earth after thee, who passest by
With the sparse leaf and the uncertain sky,
Who givest nothing yet dost brim the heart,
Being thyself of unsubstantial stuff ?
It is enough—
Thou art.
O !—Thou !

To Love

The Name

The name is hidden—hidden in my heart,—
Like the bird's song in deeps of wild green meadows,
Like the wild music haunting lone green shadows,
Like the wild dewdrop where green leaves dispart—
The name is hidden—hidden in my heart.

It is so brief ; one beat of heart would time it ;
Its single syllable seems half a cry :—
Four letters of so sweet a melody,
That the fields whisper and the wild birds rhyme it,
And my heart beats it forth reiterantly.

Yet is there ever dreamful silence near it
As of green leaves that press about a song ;
As of lone meadows where the grass grows long,
The name !—The name !—None but my soul may
hear it—
It is the pause where other voices throng.

Let the field whisper—let the dewdrop spell it—
Let my days bloom with it, delicately rosed ;—
Though all things speak of it, I will not tell it,
A garden enclosed is still the name to me—
A garden enclosed !

AT PRIME I

The Wooer

Why are you hesitant ?
Give me this once—no more,
The voice that stirs me so, the words that haunt
Your thoughts, your soul, your self—the self I
want ;
Then shut your door.

Since here on passion's brink
You stand ; unsheathe the rose ;
Loose all its sweetness out, nor stay to think ;
The sands are running—quick—before they sink,
Yourself disclose.

We have no time for fear ;
Love me instead, and try,
Try to forget all else. There's nothing here—
Nothing in all God's world to-day, my dear,
But you and I.

AT PRIME II

Since love is born at last, you say—at last !
Born of us twain—
You wonder that I do not hold him fast—
That I have somehow missed his earliest cry ;
After the burden of expectancy,
The burden and the weakness and the pain !—
All these I know. 'Twas I that bare him—I !
And yet,
Now that I hold this child of my desire,
Perfect and beautiful in every limb,
I would awhile forget
What birthtime means to mothers. You are his sire ;
O since you fathered him, come, keep him warm—
Close to your bosom clasp his living form ;—
I am too faint—I cannot look on him.

My Garden Rose

Would you your soul in a rose-soul steep,
Dream within dream, deep beyond deep ?—
How shall you deal with so strange a spirit ?
Life so delicate, how shall you stir it ?
How your harvest of gladness reap ?

Who dare the heart of a rose dissect ?
Play with it—probe it—all is wrecked.
All the exquisite secrets sleeping
Veiled and sweet in its sensitive keeping,
Shrink from our handling, and disconnect.

Think what the rose is !—Curl over curl,
Folded and fragrant its petals furl ;
A thousand thrills of colour possess it.
O, be reverent !—touch to bless it,
The ardent whiteness, the flame of pearl.

Not to be won, and yet to be wooed—
Roses are riddles, say you ?—Good !
Woo ye their sweetness, then ; not grieving
Over the mystery—rather believing
God made roses as best He could !

AT LAUDS I

To Love the Wanderer

From the Hills

Eyries of God—
The hills !
Lo, here my wandering footstep thrills
Only wild thyme and sod,
And hidden rills.
Alone am I, yet here am not alone—
(*O haunting spirit, thou with the hills art one.*)

Wild is the wind up-blowing
From heart of honey-plants ;
Wildly sweet water flowing,
Voiceth wild chants.
Wild seem all things around,
Barebreasted, breathing free
In wild untrodden ground ;
(*Wildness is fathered of infinity.*)

Sweet grows the thyme,
I know the soul of it—
Sap, scent, sun, rime,
Strength, grace—the whole of it.
Sweetly the hill is misted
O'er all its rocky chart,
Where the sweet flower hath kissed it,
(*Sweet is the purple blossom of the heart.*)

O hills! Uttermost heights!
What majesties of tears,
What wild revealing lights
Clothe your wild years!
Wild summit! Spirit presence!
Cast off thy covering,
Lay bare thy flame and essence,
(*I know thee who thou art—Stand forth, O King!*)

Voices of mountain-blooms—
Voices of water falling—
Winds, echoes, glories, glooms
To me are calling.
Wild are their words, and shrilly
Cry, as the hill-born fountains
Cry to the valley-lily,
(*Call thou me, keep me—Love is of the mountains*).

AT LAUDS II

To Love the Wanderer

From the Pinewoods

If I must sing of thee, listener and lover,
Pipe to thee low notes, and love notes, and ring
Under this pendulous pine-bough covert,
In a wild lyric, and over and over,
One sweet, stammered, reiterate thing ;—
If I must sing,

How shall I rhyme of thee ?—thou who hast wooed
me,
Binding my dream as a bird in the lime ;
How find a song for the songs that pursued me,
How find a voice for thee—thou dost elude me
All my melodies ring out of time ;—
How shall I rhyme ?

Thou art unsaid. Though my music should utter
Songs of the furthermost stars overhead,
Sounds of the seas where the great tides mutter,
Voices of April at sunrise—these flutter
Round my dream of thee, fail, and are dead.
Thou art unsaid !

AT LAUDS III

To Love the Wanderer

From the Hearth

By what door came you in ?
Answer me this.
The walls are high, the portals guarded well,
The roses thorny round my citadel ;
The little hidden path is hard to win,
Easy to miss ;—
By what door came you in ?
Answer me this.

You found a door, you did not even knock,
But on the threshold laughed, and said " *Unlock* "
And of itself it fell, and let you through
The guarded way.
Now you are here,—O you, and only you !—
Now you are here, whom all my dreams pursue,
Will you not stay ?

O teach me how to hold you lest the stair
On which so lightly now your footsteps beat,
Hereafter should reproach me, saying : " *Where,*
Where are his dearest feet ? "
Lest in my empty house the stones cry out,
And all my roses sicken as with drought,
And where your pinions rustled on the floor,
It whisper daily : " *Cometh he no more ?* "

Leave me not, Love.—O Love, you will not leave?
Teach me instead how best to fold you in;
How best to make the shutters fast, and weave
My roses thicker where the walls are thin.
Tell me once more, since here you fell on bliss—
O speak, dear prisoner—you must answer this:
How, in my fortress, did you entrance win?
Answer——

AT TIERCE I

In Absence

All day however irksome seem
The leagues 'twixt me and happiness,
I curb rebellion, acquiesce
Immured and passive. But in dream

Across the field of slumber comes
A sense that will not let me rest;
As 'twere of travel onward pressed,
And feet that follow clamouring drums.

And still confused with sleep these eyes
Opening, behold in stars o'erhead
Pulses like mine disquieted;
Then in my breast I recognise

Blind journeys of a darkened heart
That conscious only of its pain,
Forgets the miles between, and fain
Would hurry me to where thou art!

AT TIERCE II

Gypsy Song

All ye that hear me sing, if you should meet her
Keen as a wind of Spring upon the way ;
Stay not for dallying, nor soft entreat her
Sharply the gypsy thing will say you nay.

She is like mountain gorse that's gold and prickle,
And bows alone to force its shining head ;
Take hold without remorse ; her mood is fickle ;
She'll love you none the worse if she may dread.

O, honey's worth a sting !—but when ye tame her,
Tell her not anything of him who rhymes ;
Lest on the broken wing that is my name, her
Treacherous fancy fling towards olden times.

Gypsy Song

Out in the dew with me, lass,
At dawn of day.
We two astir in the coppice,
Scaring the hares at play ;
Dawn afire like the poppies,
Breaking its sheath of gray.

We two afoot in the shadows,
Stealthy, and silent, and fleet ;
We two by early meadows,
That drench the gypsies' feet ;
Shadows that tremble and move
Dreaming of light unsealed—
Meadows that dream of the mower—
We two that dream of love—
Love like a hidden flower
Set in the whispering field !

We two by early meadows,
Stealthy and silent and fleet—
Was it not sweet, my lass,—
Was it not sweet ?

Over the moor with me, lass,
With the deer and the wind.
There, in the hill's brown bosom,
Free as the wind, and lissom
As hart or hind—
There shall the gypsy range,
Breathing the sweet, the strange,
Cold scent of the gorse-blossom.

There, above heaths and hollows,
Flying, and crying, and mad,
Long wreaths of flying swallows
Cry to the moor to be glad.
The hills throw off their hoods,
The wind rushes up in a hurry,
The deer grow restless and rove,
And swift at our heels runs love,
Like a small wild thing of the woods,
Drunk on the trail of its quarry.

O the moor, and the swallows,
Flying, and crying, and mad !—
Were we not glad, we two—
Were we not glad ?

Under the moon with me, lass,
To the nightingale's tune.
We two together roaming
Under the moon !
Now in the silver gloaming,
The wildest bird will be homing—
Homing soon.

The wild-duck winging by,
Dip to the river-breast ;
And a wild moon riding high
In fields of bean-blossom sky,
Knoweth her mountain-nest.
Come, my lass,—you and I,
Shall we not fall on rest ?

In dew, and leaves, and briars,
In flame and smoking grass,
Under the tall tree-spires,
The camp shall gather its fires—
The gypsy gather his lass.

Now in the silver gloaming,
The wildest bird will be homing;
Under the moon, my lass—
Under the moon !

AT SEXT I

What could I know of life, Life-giver,
  Ere thou didst bid me be ?
Waves, and the broken wave's endeavour
  To follow the tides to sea.

Before thou gavest the rose, Rose-giver
  What could I know of bliss ?
Moons, and the faint moon-flowers that ever
  Sway to their shadowy kiss.

What could I know of light, Light-giver,
  Ere thy passage had been ?
Only the heavens where no stars quiver,
  Spread with a pallid sheen.

What could I know of love, Love-giver,
  Ere thou didst call me home ?
Dreams that ride on the rush of the river,
  To break with its bubbles in foam.

AT SEXT II

Nay!
Yours unto me was the giving, but God was the primal giver;
Father of all things good, and Lord of the mystic vine:
He laid the cup in your hands, and strewed for me, the receiver,
Flowers of the grape with the grape, and lily-buds through the wine.

The year we met was the chalice—full, full of ineffable things:
Of small, sweet, blossoming moments:—tones of your voice, and words
Half-said—unsaid—re-said—as our souls on wings
Flickered and called to each other with cries as of wild shy birds.

Days of our meetings and partings—what meetings and partings were those!
Meeting—the rose in bud with morning's hesitant breath
Veiling it silverly still; and parting—the full-blown rose,
Drooping because of the parting, but sweet, yea, sweeter in death.

Into the past with it all!—the joy and the little tears;
All unto Heaven were consecrate, mixed with its gift supreme.
The year is over and gone. Ah! pray for other years
Fragrant from herbs past-pressed, and fresh with flowers of dream.

AT NONE I

The Lost Meeting

The hour I missed, the hour that you designed
Here in your heart for me—O, how am I
Cheated of bliss until once more I find
That which drew near—so near !—and passed me
by !

Now the dull day unthrilled, unglorified,
Stands bare of blessedness in life, as when
Joy flooding inland with the running tide,
Draws her sweet waters from the cliffs again.

Ah ! who shall tell me all it might have given !
Yourself you know not, how the hour is flown
With songs unvoiced for ever. Only Heaven
Knows what it held of happiness foregone !

AT NONE II

The place where they did not meet

Doth it not stand and wait ?—
The city of the plain,
Whose still untrodden street
And visionary fane
Unto our willing feet
In dream were consecrate ?

Like harvest-fields untilled,
Whence none may hope for bread,
Or buds of frosted roses
That never gather red,
This dim old town encloses
A promise unfulfilled.

Like doves around their cote,
About its towers were wheeled
Who knows what words unuttered—
What sweetness unrevealed—
What dreams that fluttered—fluttered—
Fluttered—and nested not !

AT NONE III

In the Twilight

What time comes dusk dim-tinted as a pearl,
To whisper lullabies in field and wood,
While to her breast in ever deepening peace
She holds her shadows and her drowsy trees—
Draws in horizons, and bids space upfurl
As though the round earth were a daisy-bud.—

One movement still disturbs the darkening land,
Where pastoral April lieth lulled to sleep :
'Tis that of gentle flocks. Like dreams they pass
Up to the hills along the roadside grass,
Eager for home, where soon the shepherd's hand
Gathers the lambs, and foldeth in the sheep.

O my most dear ! So would I shepherd thee,
Might my thought reach thee on thine upland road !
So follow thee through fields of thine own choosing,
So fold thee in with faithful prayer, enclosing
Thy gentle dreams, thine every memory
And all thy little leaping hopes in God.

AT NONE IV

In Absence

Now for a time my days are bare of love.
I see you not, nor hear. Dream as I will,
Your voice may not these listening ears fulfil ;
Nor on my threshold-stone your footstep move ;
Nor to your call mine eager spirit thrill.

Yet always are you here ! Whate'er may wake
The sense of beauty, waketh too in me
Some baffling, sweet, and haunting memory
Of something that love is, and for love's sake
Goes clad in double loveliness to me.

Be these my ways in shadow, or in bloom,
Unto myself I seem to wander o'er
Places that knew your step an hour before ;
As though on entering quick an empty room,
I heard your footfall on an upper floor.

If I but pick wild boughs of clematis
From the white fields of fragrance where they blow,
Or feel a balmy wind in overflow
Across the stars, they whisper : " What you miss
Cometh to you from dreamland even so ! "

There's not one place of leaves in thicket hidden,
But lispeth of love's garments rustling by ;

Nor any flare of sunset in the sky,
But calleth me, as though your voice had bidden
My soul unto the mountains with a cry.

The air is full of shadows, echoes, calls—
Dim thrills that wake a lonely heart from sleep
And make it leap, as the swift trout will leap
Out of the twilight—then again it falls,
As the trout falls again through waters deep.

All speaks of you. *Then wherefore, heart of mine,*
Art still unsatisfied, still tempest-tossed?
Alas! it comforts not. There, where thou dost
Most feel such nearness, dearness—most divine
Love's fragrant soul, thou still dost miss it most!

AT NONE V

I was not sorrowful, dearest, believe me,
When you stood beside me, and counsel gave ;
Think ! could a presence so coveted grieve me ?
It was your nearness—it was your dearness
Made me grave.
Lo ! at mid-June, every leaf to its brother
Lendeth not shadow, but fulness of hue,
So at love's noon, when our hearts to each other
Lean and expand, like the leaves in the land,
With touch of your hand on my hand, life grew
Not dark, O my dearest, but deeper, through you.

AT VESPERS I

O Variable!
Most variable, yet most beloved still!
You are like water and in movement live
As doth the tide, that on its rocky shelf
Sways back and forward, compassed in itself;
Melts and reshapes, and ever seems to give
Its being to the barren earth, and yet
Rolls off inviolate. O, I could deem
Our unbelievable, sweet hours a dream,
But for the furrows which your passage set
About my days. Here then in pain you have
Sealed unforgotten joys; here, once with you,
Love came to me, and like the breaking wave,
Gave and withdrew!

AT VESPERS II

'Twixt brows of Lucifer and Michael's eyes,
Clear stars co-equal once, this difference lies—
This only—good and evil. He that fell
Was luminary still, and in this wise
Glory perverted lit the flames of hell.

Thus the Venetians brooding o'er the head
Of Him who brake and blest and gave the bread,
Dipped their firm brushes in the same warm gold
With which they limned the Savour's locks, to shed
A ring of fire round Judas' temples cold.

I thank dear Heaven you know no middle way—
Must good or evil be. I dare not lay
Sure sentence on the soul in such a niche;
But rather pondering on its features, say
"The colouring of Christ or Judas—which?"

AT VESPERS III

Although your mood was all times rough to me
What then ?
Have I not still the stars, the moon and sea—
I, and all men ?
To me who never stood in your good graces,
Whose eyes fell blind through winking back of tears,
There yet remain
The stars for fellowship in lonely years,
The moon for dream, the sea's most ancient spaces
To rock my pain.

AT COMPLINE I

Time of dews !—
Now the wild heart of April breaketh loose
Again.
A cry comes ringing between dusk and dark,
Tossing and tumbling, echoing of Spring ;—
It is the cuckoo ;—now another strain
Rushes across this rapture—'tis the lark
O'er dim green fields divinely rioting.
The very wind on gusts of melody
Carries the heart with April's heart along—
Thou who wert ever silent—why must I think on thee
At evensong.

Who shall tell
What in the inner soul of Spring may dwell,
That stirs
Such clamouring voices, and such beat of wings,
Responsive, in our own heart's prison-house ?
If joy or pain ; or if her choristers
Only the haunting mystery of things
Chant in mid-heaven, and on budded boughs.
Is joy afield tumultuously free,
Or drifting dream, or deep-impassioned wrong ?
Thou who wert ever silent—why must I think on thee
At evensong !

Spring—O Spring !
Wild dweller !—wild enchantress !—faery Spring !

Whose soul
In music overflowing rushes by,
With thousand voices flooding up to bliss,
And thousand more that fail and onward roll
Into that hush more piercing than a cry—
Frail are thy minstrels, yet not frail in this
That they are seers. Things stormier than the sea
Lurk thy dew-notes and reedy pipes among ;—
Thou who wert ever silent—why must I think on thee
At evensong !

AT COMPLINE II

The Spring Desolate

Friend, whereto art thou come ?
Green after snow
Calls not to life my frozen spirit now.
Lo ! unto me—bereft—the winter season
Benumbed, rain-sodden, torn with tempest rude as
Satan's own breath, brings not so much of treason
As thou, sweet April, once my friend—as thou,
Whose every thrush cries " *Judas, Judas, Judas* "
From the bough !

Hast ever smiled on treachery ?
Answer this.
Didst even mock dim Olivet with bliss ?
Were haply springing things within that garden,
Whereon the Friend of Friends fell trembling—
praying—
Didst add sick perfumes to the Saviour's burden,
Crushed from the grass, that He might nothing
miss
Of human pain, when Judas came betraying
With a kiss ?

O April anguish !
Ever new, yet old,
Old as the heart of man ! So bland, so bold
The treacherous airs ;—so seeming-soft, so bitter

The first false warmth of Spring! Pain not releases
Even the sweet birds' small and silver twitter—
It seems the chink of death. For we are told
Elsewhere Love's price. For thirty silver pieces
Christ was sold!

Epilogue

Pluck not the branches of Eden,
Nurslings of Earth our mother,
White with the milk of the Spring.

Pluck not the branches of Eden ;
Lo ! at a touch the blossom
Falls, and the leaf therewith.

Pluck not the branches of Eden ;
Blood not sap is their being,
And the nectar thereof a tear.

ALLA PASTORALE

Alla Pastorale

Pastoral of the Epiphany

Caspar, Melchior, and Balthazar—
Three wise kings from afar,
Dream-driven past their eyries in the snows of old Tibet,
Where a cold blue moon enamels
Bleaching bones of men and camels,
Down unfooted frozen gorges with their tinkling caravan
Lead from the icy mountains ; while overhead a star
Sprung from the womb of the East, and as yet unnamed by man,
Towards Bethlehem of Juda hath a silver forehead set.

" Where is the Jewish King,
That we three may adore Him ?
Myrrh, frankincense and gold we bring
Humbly to lay before Him."

They ask and no man knoweth ;
One frowns, another mocks ;
Past the well-side, past the fire
The long procession floweth,
And they ask, and no man knoweth ;

When lo ! a shepherd goeth
Homeward beside his flocks :
" *The King is in the byre,*
With an ass, and with an ox."

With an ass and ox beside Him,
In a deep trough of stone,
All kingliness denied Him,
Lies Heaven's Holiest One.

The kindly beasts of burden
In the night are whispering :
" Lord Babe, what shall our guerdon
Be, when Thou art crowned a King ?
Man's heart to babe and beast
Is harsh, and full of harm,
But with our humble breath, Thou see'st,
We two do keep Thee warm ! "

Then cried the hollow trough
Beneath Him, piteously :
" Though I be hard, and rude, and rough,
King Babe, I shelter Thee ! "

The Babe of Bethlehem
Lifteth His Hands new-born,
And blesseth and caresseth them
That are like Him forlorn.
He saith unto the hornèd beast
Kneeling with lowered head :

" My faithful blessing on thy feet
That tread the flour from out the wheat,
Whereof hereafter at My Feast
My loved ones shall eat Bread."

Then to the ass He turned and spake :
" Thou comfort in My need !
O have no fear ! For thy dear sake,
When I My royal entry make,
An ass shall be My steed."

To the stone beneath His Head
The little Saviour said :
" Most welcome stone to which I cling
While still so small and weak ;
The day that I am crowned a King,
Again thy breast I'll seek."

In the stable of the rocks
Maid Mary begins to weep,
But the stone, the ass, and the ox—
They all slumber and sleep.
There riseth a cry outside—
Glory shines in through the roof—
The ox shews a gilded hide
Against a silver trough—
The ass lifteth silver shoes
From off a silver floor—
And a cry floweth in from outside :
" Behold the King of the Jews,
Whom we have come to adore !

We have found the King of the Jews,
Who saw His star in the East—
Behold the World's Desire,
Set between beast and beast !

We have found the World's Desire—
Attend ! all ye that pass :
Christ is in the byre,
With an ox, and with an ass ! "

Pastoral of August

What time warm downs lie gold against the sky,
And the whole land with honey-bloom is sweet ;
When farmers stand knee-deep in rustling wheat,
Gauging its uncut amber silently,
Pause we awhile ;—for here two seasons meet,
And each on each lays soft the kiss of peace.
Summer may now from sugared labour cease,
Nor yet hath Autumn shod his busy feet ;
So while these two with close affection greet,
Then hand in hand pace ripe, mysterious fields,
Shall we not also fetch our breath, replete
With that full sense of rest their presence yields ?

O loveliest moment of the year !—when sap
Still at high tide lies motionless for heat,
Brimming the rose's cup in Summer's lap,
While she yet lingers in some green retreat.
Scarce dare we move, lest we should shake her mood
In these wide silences of pool and rush ;
Or vex the brooding spirit of the wood
Voiced by its dove, where else the land were hush.

Can this be rest ?—'tis rest in counterfeit,
'Tis but the poppy's challenge to the rose ;
Too soon will August, that wild reaper, beat
Against the fetters of his own repose.
Now whisper Autumn's lips in Summer's ear—

Now in her hand his unused sickle gleams—
The wave of joy is poised for overthrow—
The flower full-winged needs but to sigh and go—
Bid them delay, ye gods !—there's nothing here
So precious as this faltering of the year
Upon the threshold of her gate of dreams.

For all that Dawn comes slow and soberly,
Yet rosy sunrise leapeth at her skirts ;
Earth's gentle nurse is she, and in the sky
Bids the small stars, that ruder daylight hurts,
Put out their lamps. Most steadfast choristers
Are these tired sparklets of the careless moon,
That nightly summons, but forgets them soon ;
Then cometh Dawn, with that soft step of hers,
Breathes down their lanthorns dim, and bids them hie
Safe through the curtains of her nursery.

Earth's lustier babies call her from the grass :
Buds open-mouthed for dew, and living things
That, as the sun leaps up to see her pass,
Shake fire and water from their limbs and wings.
O what an hour is this !—what radiance here
Makes the green earth a ball of purest jade,
With a wide rim of crystal overlaid ;—
Makes all it holds so delicately clear,
That a bird's pinions, and the flowery grass
Fringing the hedge, transparent seem as glass.

Upon this glory with their tender eyes
The younglings of the year peep joyous forth,
And one by one from secret shelters rise
To dance and caper on so sweet an earth.

That which alone could scare their mirth away—
Man's feet upon the hills—is yet unheard ;
His voice blends not with those of flock and bird.
Lord of all things and yet accurst—to play
With humbler lives in vain his infant cries.
There was no human babe in Paradise.

Storm

Look how the trees of the land make for the ridges at sunset—
Windswept and torn they stand, and wave wild arms to the valleys,
Beckoning their brethren on: "Come!" they cry, "for the hollow
Over the hills is aflame and calls to us—shall we not follow?"

There from the day's dim coasts the great sun leaps as a diver
Down; and his glorious hosts of beams leap in with their leader;
There troop cloud caravans, and there the birds of our meadows
Dip upon resolute wing, and are lost in its rosy shadows.

Only the woods in the valley strain as a fleet that in harbour
Plunges where high seas rally, and heaves with the heaving billow;
They too would march to the sunset, they too would swoop as the swallow
Over the mountain-rim, and into the burning hollow.

Vainly they wrench at the ground, and cry to the wind and the starlings :
" Lend us your wings, we are bound—we are fettered here and in prison—
O bid us soar as a song, and drift with the dreams that are driven
Straight to the rose of fire that throbs like a heart in heaven ! "

Loudly and long they call ; and night falleth down on the valley ;
Then, like steeds in a stall, they smite the enveloping darkness,
Toss ineffectual heads, and struggling with weight and with tether
Lash out a murderous limb, or dash themselves down together.

For a great wind is wrath above an invisible pasture,
Herding the stars on his path till a torn sky's furthermost spaces
Furrowed with restless gold, look down upon earth and her courses
Filled with the furious shapes and the manes of recalcitrant horses.

Dandelions

With their soft heads like balls of yellow silk,
Light shapes, and radiant being—who could think
That young maids' lives were nursed on bitter milk
To set unwary meddlers' teeth on edge ?
They are for love unripe,
And nature's prototype
Uprears its golden top-knot from the brink
Of every tuft of grass in April's hedge.

All surface-beauty and all outward fire
Are dandelion-flowers that children clutch,
To satisfy their passionate desire
For honey in the blooms they look upon ;
But leave against the bank,
Because the taste is rank,
The heart so light of fibre that with touch
Of summer warmth it feathers and is gone.

Winter-larks

Notes of the lark in winter—not a song,
But a brief twitter as he sweeps along ;
So from the glitter of her carcanet
Some queen might shake a sparkling drop or two,
Or roses wild in dawnings windy-wet,
Scatter sweet dew.

Hearing we think on all things cold and free
Yet joyous—Bubbles breaking into glee—
Faint sound that troubles many a sleeping mere
Over the hills, remote and far away ;
Or light on rivers running crystal clear
'Twixt reed and ray.

Again the call and cry—our hearts again
Leap to a thrilling summons, but in vain.
Beyond all chilling waters of pure springs,
All virgin beams, all glories of wide air,
They lead us to the sealèd fount of things,
And perish there.

With a wild sense of lost felicity
We hear the fleeting reed-notes rise and die,
Bringing us greeting from that world of dream
Where Joy nude-born, and irresponsible,
On flutes of rushes by Molpeia's stream
First piped his fill.

Sound of a stream in the dawning, but the current is all sweet air
Swirling 'neath Heaven's dim awning, ere ever the world is ware
Of aught but stretches of slumber and the rapture of dream-things there.

Round and round swim the billows rocking the boughs outside ;
And our heads cling close to our pillows, while our souls rush out on the tide,
Filled with intoxicant movement like the labourless wave they ride.

There is a higher being that yet is lower than thought—
A hearing, a feeling and seeing, beside which the senses are nought ;
Hyper-sense leaves the body behind, though it leaves the real Heaven unsought.

Then without conscious motion we live in the life of things,
Heaved in a deep grass ocean, or tumbled on finches' wings,
Or rapt into honey and scent like the creature that hums and stings.

As the snake casteth off her slough so we cast dull flesh behind ;
Mere life upholdeth us now, to the stilling and slumbering of mind ;
Spirits of bliss are we, irresponsible, even as wind.

Child of the wilds am I, a nursling of moor and mountain,
Child of the open sky, and wader in vagrant waters ;
Free winds rock me and pass ; rain rusheth over me singing ;
I, from the moorland grass, join in their song of freedom,
Song of solitude, song of exultance, song of praise,
All my days.

Sweet is mine inmost soul, sweet the breath of my being,
Sweet my life in its hole of waters brown in the sunshine ;—
What can rob or what harm me, the gypsy bush of the bushes ?
Riseth fair or in storm the days in these airswept spaces
All we tameless,—all we nomads—children of heather
Laugh together.

Mattereth not if my feet stand ever in pools that are bitter ;
I in myself am sweet—nothing to me but is tonic ;
Winds whose whisper is ice, flavours of herbs astringent

Turn to savour and spice touched by my vigorous spirit.
Take and break me—all of me—leaf, sap, wood,
All is good.

Never a rose but seems to dread the thorn in its bosom,
Never a lily that dreams not of snaring a star in her river—
I, that am heir to naught, go thornless and dreamless and fragrant ;—
Wild bees kiss me unsought, the wilderness loves my dominion ;
More than the lily, more than the rose and all things peerless,
I spring fearless !

February

A maid of mystery, veilèd February
Like that faint hour before the dawn of day,
Comes on us, muffled up in cobweb grey,
And whispers coldly that the sun is nigh,
But steals no glory from his golden eye.

So early-born, so dim and so unformed
Seems this young month, that, seeing her, the mind
Reverts in dream to Earth's primæval rind,
Earth's twilight age of waters crater-warmed,
Wherein strange life, half fish, half blossom
swarmed.

Now, as we muse, shell-pink anemones
Small sweet sea-spirits seem, and hardly flowers ;
And lily-blooms from other climes than ours
Coil sappy stems that might have swayed at ease
In the deep pools of lost Silurian seas.

All these must February's hands let fall
Ere she may pass, as once Siluria past
Into those hours that bring the sun at last ;
Sun, song and sparkle—wild enchantments all !
Yet is there charm in what grey days recall.

From the Moors

Solitariness !
The bare and splendid heath—
The waste of heaven
Afire, and crossed by purposeful wild wings—
The wind's tumultuous breath,
Fresh with sea-salt, and loud with clamour driven
Out of the clouds, by soaring, sailing things.
O Solitariness !
O rusted heath—waste heaven—
O strong and dauntless wings—O burning light—
O spaces infinite—
O vast, serene and honey-breathing sod—
Here the soul finds herself, and peace, and God !

GINEVRA

Ginevra

I

Upon those years that Dante's glorious lute
Fell silent in the City of the Flower,
And he that sang was dust, and Petrarch mute,
And gay Boccaccio dead within the hour,
There dwelt in shadow of Giotto's tower
A youth and damsel, that at eventide
Were used to meet where Italy doth grow her
Apple and oak and orange, side by side,
Unpruned, in ancient gardens spreading wild and wide.

II

Much have I read of sinful Florence—much
Dreamed of the spires and palaces whereon
My gaze hath never rested—vision such
As beautiful and baleful Babylon,
Or those enchanted domes by setting sun
Builded in heaven—a city of the skies
That leaneth o'er the mountain and is gone ;
Brief glimpses sealed upon our ardent eyes
In beauty which all things doth spiritualise.

III

But vain it were to sing of lands unseen ;
And though in Tuscan grove these lovers meet,
Yet, to my thought, 'twas lush with English green
Born of more temperate skies, whose lesser heat

Lit a low flame of flower at their feet.
Here when grey dew on pleachèd leaves lay cool,
They met, they loved, they vowed and parted
sweet ;—
Ginevra trembling 'neath her parent's rule,
And young Antonio fresh from great Bologna's
school.

IV

Divinest passion of our hearts !—alas
That ever love should go while life remains !
Antonio truly loved ; and all he was,
He was because of love. Love, in his veins,
Quickened each power and annulled its pains ;
Love sang through all his days, as April thrills
With young impassioned life her greening plains,
And uttereth herself in bubbling rills,
In bud, and bird, and bloom, and blossoming
syllables.

V

O who had dreamed that May's intricacies
Of orchard bough and oleander bloom
Could fail to screen from envious ears and eyes
The stolen meetings in this verdurous room—
But so it chanced. A passer-by, whose plume
Caught on a Judas-tree, espied with sorrow
Young faces in the green and rosy gloom,
And pushing warily those bushes thorough,
Saw gentle hands unclasped, and heard the word :
" To-morrow."

VI

Here was a piece of gossip for the streets !
" Know ye Ginevra, daughter of Almieri,
Who day by day young Rondinelli meets ? "
Then Florence aye in love with love made query
Anent Ginevra and her house, with airy
Gibes on the little comedy to come ;
Nor did there want some gay, malicious fairy
To warn her father where he sate at home,
In the Marcato Vecchio, adding sum to sum.

VII

The time was early May, when court and booth
Met among leaves—a custom now antique ;
And homes of all degrees their freshest youth
Poured out in open country, there to seek
Pure light, wide air, and roses for the cheek,
Till Arno, misting 'neath its moon, recall
Young gallants from the field, and maidens meek,
Crowned with the wilding green, and clover-ball
And lily-flower—themselves the fairest flowers of all.

VIII

Accepted beauty of this pastoral band
Was she who by the market left her train,
From silent, smiling lips with blythesome hand
To shrill " good nights " waving good night again,
Till the young voices sought her ears in vain,

Becoming merely sound perplexed and sweet,
Like jangle-choir of birds in wintry lane,
That round their roosting-bushes call and beat,
As each gay flutterer lights upon a safe retreat.

IX

Ginevra too sped home ;—her father's walls
Loomed sudden frowning in the bluish gleam ;
And the wild heads on marble capitals,
In oak repeated on the gallery-beam,
As though some passionate musician's theme
From voice to voice was tossed and deepened—these
To her dim thought did shapes of warning seem ;
And bade her tremble, and her young blood freeze
When in the groaning gate she turned the rusty keys.

X

Then lo ! as towards the chink she bent her ear,
Upon that doubtful threshold taking root,
The doors rolled open, issuing voices clear,
And lights, and festal smell of wine and fruit.
Bellini's little angel with the lute
That bows before the Mother-Maid and Child,
Stands even as she did then—with one small foot
Uplift, large eyes in wonderment beguiled,
Bent head, and tender mouth half drooping, though it smiled.

XI

" Ho ! truant," cried Almieri, with a laugh
That shook his beard as tempest shaketh snows,
" Why, this tall slip—this budding staff,
Sole prop of mine old house—aye, aye, the rose
Is ripe for graft—Good sirs, how swift she grows,
Like the young moon in heaven bringing light !
Friend Agolanti, shall we now disclose
Our plan ?—what say you ?—shall we forthwith plight
Our boy and girl, and their betrothal seal to-night ?

XII

At this, pale tapers in the damsel's eyes
Spread huge as suns ; sound rang a jangled bell
Conveying naught ; all things seemed fantasies
Like those in fevered dream churned up from hell.
One cry she gave—poor bird in snare !—Love's knell ;
While from each cheek the rosy little god
Pulled down his colours bidding her farewell ;
And to his throne with sternest iron shod
Came Fate ;—for then girl's heart must go with father's nod.

XIII

And toasts were drunk ;—the bridegroom kissed her hand,
Found it ice-chill—natheless unmoved he turned

Long compliments, with lips precise and bland
Pursed at an ivory ear. This sure had burned
At such fair speech, but that her heart discerned
Less love than duty in the formal act.
Passionately his future yoke she spurned,
Who now seemed compassed, cold—a man of fact,
Of stiff scholastic manners moulded and compact.

XIV

While in small epigram his arduous wit
Split straws, and strained at gnats, and thrice refined
Large, wholesome, human feeling down to fit
The cameo-carving academic mind—
Ginevra in great golden chair reclined
With proud lids drooped on him who sat beside,
Scarce heard and answered nothing. Free as wind
Her soul had fled to groves by Arno's tide,
And in Antonio's arms placed young Francesco's bride.

XV

O to be there once more !—take joyous flight
From this close crowded hall and durance tense,
Towards dewy branches budded with delight,
And Rondinelli's simple eloquence.
Whate'er her lover's lore and letters—thence
He drew no flowers of language when he wooed,
But let his passion strong in innocence

Stand forth undraped. What then? The gods are nude,
And only puppets need in fashion's rags be mewed.

XVI

The tapers flickering in each gilded sconce
Seemed dull as coffin-candles to her eye,
The table naperies a shroud, and once
With the whole weight of bitter destiny
Loading her soul, herself she seemed to lie
In cerement-wrappings, palpitant for breath;
While that brief light which strikes and flashes by,
Confusing reason, shewed her life beneath
Huge, fancied stones, forced down, and suffocate in death.

XVII

'Twas past. Once more came roses to her face
With deep relievèd sighs, while they who met
To pledge her fate, dispersed; and, from his place,
With careful feet punctiliously set,
And for so brief a parting long regret,
Francesco bowed him thence.
Now might her breast
Into wild sobbing break, and warm tears wet
Father's and mother's hand, as these she pressed
With hopeless hope, and her most piteous tale confessed.

XVIII

And volubly her mother spake : " Yea, sooth,
Some tongues had wagged about the market-place ;
And Rondinelli was a worthy youth,
But Agolanti came of wealthier race.
Maids must not think to choose ; by Heaven's grace
Parents were more discreet. And love once told,
All men were like. No wife could hope to trace
In husband's eye the wooer's glance of old.
Full purse made glad the hearth, full heart brought comfort cold."

XIX

Then Almieri twitching brows of reason
Stubbornly down upon his mounting rage,
Smote his hoar locks : Could these white hairs thatch treason ?
Or parents urge the child of their old age
Into another—if a gilded cage,
If not for safety ? Pestilence was abroad.
Already plague-fires smoked ; at every stage
Young maidens wept—poor lilies in the bud,
Defenceless, orphaned, stripped of sheltering fatherhood.

XX

Now while Ginevra, terrified and pale,
Leaned her despair against the casement grill ;

And nature, viewless nurse, bade her inhale
Sweet airs of starlit grass and daffodil—
Delicious draught that passion 'gainst its will
Must cool—so strangely are we made !—o'erhead,
In arras-bed enriched by plume and frill,
Lay Donna Lisa, well-content, and fed
Long hours despoiled of sleep with victory instead.

XXI

Antonio, still unconscious of his doom,
Woke vaguely shadowed on a sunny hour,
And all day long through vineyards sweet in bloom,
That nameless something robbed his life of power ;
Yea, the sharp odours of the vine in flower
Bit at his heart like small teeth nibbling fine ;
Fain had he laughed ; fear pitched the music lower,
And buzzed about his ears the psalmist's line :
" *O the little foxes—the foxes in the vine !* "

XXII

The hills lay steeped in hyacinthine hues ;
Vainly their brows for signs of storm he scanned ;
Only sweet peace was sealed thereon, and dews
That drank the sun made fair that morning-land ;
Yet, as the hours sped, often did he stand
And question the warm blue above the wall,
If haply tempest brooded ; and his hand
Startled would let the pruning-sickle fall,
While his heart leaped responsive to a fancied call.

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XXIII

Before the noonday paths had cooled again,
He bade his wondering peasants leave the vine ;
Then he in haste bound rosy cyclamen,
And tufted grass, and the grape's tangled twine
Into a fragrant load ; and with this sign
Of a long day spent warm in open field
Tossed on his arm, and breathing of sunshine,
Took a wild path in olive groves concealed,
Towards Florence, ere yet the Ave Maria pealed.

XXIV

Now if Ginevra from her walls look down,
A sense of pastoral things will tinge the air,
Sun-rosed, dew-ripened, warmly flushed and brown ;
And she will know whose hand hath scattered there
Summer with earth still matted in its hair,
Fresh from the hills ; and her whole heart will leap
Forth to her country lover, and the fair
Voices of sweet green fields. So may they keep
Another stolen tryst in dewy branches deep.

XXV

He gains the trysting-place ; the moments lapse ;
But still his love withholds herself from sight.
Hark ! in the woods a wild wing whines and flaps—
Haply a dove disturbed and taking flight
On hearing steps.—O now the sinking light

To dusk relinquisheth the garden plot—
Why tarrieth she ?—Come, read the stars aright,
Or on cold holly-prickles tell thy lot !
Ginevra—cometh she ?—She comes. She cometh not.

XXVI

Through those thick leaves, wild bells of Florence steal,
Tossing the hours apace towards midnight goal ;
Crisp fragrance is abroad, and laurels feel
Diana's silver eyes upon their soul.
With every burst of chimes the shadows roll
Deeper and deeper round the silent lover ;
Night birds wheel round, and dark as bat and owl,
Terror and doubt, those wings of evil hover
About the faltering steps that soon his fate discover.

XXVII

Where a stone lion ever lapped in vain
At a small sweet-voiced rivulet, that burst
Out of the tangles of his ferny mane,
And in its crumbling basin mocked his thirst,
The flying moonlight fitfully rehearsed
Dances with something fugitive and white,
Thrust in his jaws. 'Twould seem at first
As though in pity of his torment, night
Fed him with lilies from the water in flight.

XXVIII

Alas ! it was no lily but a scroll,
Splashed with the salt of tears—illegible—
" Antonio, my house gives me, body and soul,
To Agolanti ; ere this moon fulfil
Her downward path, I shall be wed—but still—
O still thy love to all eternity.
Though never thine in life, perchance, yet will
Death and all that beyond the grave may lie
Find me still thine—for I will love thee though I die.

XXIX

" So this is not farewell."
Then once again,
His name as though upon a cry was writ :
" O poor Antonio ! " and therewith the pen
Sure must have failed in sweet hands holding it,
For there the letter ended.
O most fit
Epitaph ! What multiple turf greens o'er
What tragedies—how many graves are slit
To some such word, in churchyards by the score !
All's said.—Can the death-places in our hearts claim more ?

XXX

Yea, poor Antonio ! Mercifully comes
To hopes crushed suddenly beyond rebound,
With magnitude of grief, grief that benumbs,
And robs reality of colour and sound.

Then things, like wraiths dissolve, and are discrowned,
Then love seems but the shadow of the rose
Flung by a faltering summer on the ground,
And joy, the shadow-dance that comes and goes
When times through windy leaves a fitful sunshine flows.

XXXI

Too brief an hour in such grey limbo dare
The spirit cut from happier moorings lie ;
Soon must it reassume the man—soon wear
Again its painful personality ;—
Put on this bruising armour, and descry
Its helplessness within ; while piece by piece
Out of its wreck the crippled thing must try
To reconstruct itself, and life ; and cease
To claim from destiny the soul's last hope—release.

XXXII

When Florence in her meaner alleys felt
The yellow sunrise gild them one by one,
Upon this gulf of glory where she dwelt,
Antonio stumbled ; all his purpose gone ;
Into the morning falling like a stone,
Unheeding where he chanced.
The little square
That stayed his feet, with blazing bonfires shone :–
Long tulip-tongues of flame that licked the air
In flickerings wild, and fought the splendid radiance there.

XXXIII

Thereon was piled great load of balsam-boughs :
Rosemary, thyme, and branching pine and bay :
God's hillside angels, that each sordid house
Held at its doors to keep the plague away ;
Yet vainly—for already those who pray
Beside the dead, were grouped around a bier :
Stern, masked and hooded men that, day by day,
Among the poor went down on errand drear,
And with their shrouded dead, shrouded would disappear.

XXXIV

These with disfavour on Antonio stared :
" What seekest thou ? " The lover made reply :
" Death only ! " and in anger turned, and bared
His ravaged features to their scrutiny.
And one came forward then, with lips awry,
Forcing a grin : " O man, be of good cheer !
For even now I am mown, even now I die.
Take thou my place beside the dead man here,
Shoulder this pestilence, and triumph—Death is near ! "

XXXV

Lo ! in a trice Antonio found him cowled,
Vested in brown, and forced along the road
With men unknown, of loathly task, sad-souled,
And stern of eye :—a sinister brotherhood.
He that had fallen, lay calling upon God,

Stripped of his habit, plucking at the stone
Between the smouldering fires ; and few that trod
That stricken place showed mercy to his moan,
But fled, or on the flames bade fresher spice be thrown.

XXVI

Now as the funeral towards the hills was set,
And in and out of fairer quarters wound,
Another troop processional it met,
That in a narrow alley held the ground.
A marriage. In the midst, all golden-gowned,
And silver-starred, the bride and bridegroom paced,
Glittering as sunlight, moving to sweet sound
Of wedding-peals that here the morning radiance laced
With thousand thrills, and swift the burial chant displaced.

XXXVII

Ere leaping blood had yet his heart forsaken,
Antonio knew whose bridewreath brushed the pall ;
Ginevra !—pale she passed, and pure, and shaken
Like some sweet wildflower fluttering to its fall.
Then the church gathered her with organ-call,
And clangour of bells, and glories gold-engrained
Of companies dim on faintly frescoed wall.
The doors swung to ; and only love remained
Shut out—a mangled nothing in a life disdained.

XXXVIII

Yet, at the marriage, whisperers walked the aisles ;
Faces shewed blank against the gorgeous gloom :
" 'Twas Rondinelli !—Agolanti smiles
Too soon—his bride is white as lily-bloom !
Ill-omened match !—What if the plague should come
Upon us all from such a meeting ?—why,
The lover's face seemed carven for the tomb—
More blanched than hers ; the marble effigy
Of him we knew !—Nay now she swoons—'tis she will die."

XXXIX

Even as the priest in nuptial blessing spake,
And tones were hushed, and organ-voice and bell
Reverently still ; Ginevra's spirit brake.
As falls the wave sea-spent, she swayed and fell.
Then all was tumult. Some without farewell
Sped, fearing plague, and some would onward press
Deeming she swooned ; some cried on evil spell,
Like the warm rose that showers dispossess,
The marriage pomps had end in tears and nothingness.

XL

Towards afternoon the bells began to toll
That to such vibrant joy that morn had swung ;
And Florence sighed : " God rest her sweetest soul,
A noonday bride and gone ere evensong !

Lord save us from the plague!" And every tongue
Spake tenderly of one so nobly wed,
So lovely, so beloved, who now among
Strange Agolanti tombs must lay her head;
Cold, stiff—for ever housed between the alien dead.

XLI

And panic rode the city. Even those
In church of Santa Reparata left
To seal Ginevra in her last repose,
Clumsy with terror, splintered to the heft,
Hammer and chisel in a marble cleft;
And the unsoldered tomb forsook in haste.
Now the poor child, of company bereft,
Lay in her chill sarcophagus encased,
Crowned with her bridal wreath still quick and scarce displaced.

XLII

Uprose a moon in maiden purity
To watch the place where thing so pure was hid;
Like some swift silver-wingèd butterfly
Her kiss ethereal swept the coffin-lid;
Soon, through the chinks, an argent hand she slid,
And touched Ginevra's heart that faintly stirred
In deeps of peace; then palpitant amid
Its stifling bands beat wild as netted bird;—
Wake, wake, poor flutterer—thou art ensepulchred!

XLIII

O who may tell that waking cry !—Who knows
Save the unhappy thralls of pain's decrees,
What dark surprises rend the souls of those
Condemned to drink its bitter to the lees.
What disbelief !—what terrible certainties
Branded in torment there !—What helpless tears,
As the heart twists before Fate's treacheries !
What hopes of succour—and no succour nears !
Pain is Lord of the world, and pain hath cruel ears.

XLIV

Yet—miracle !—Thank God, a hidden power
Lies in the prayer of Heaven's weakest thing,
That like the spirit of a mountain-flower
Splits ice-bound rocks to spread a fluttering wing.
Ginevra's passion of being shuddering
Against so dread a fate, found strength to rive
Even these fastnesses of Death the King.
In her frail hands the creviced marbles drive
Down-crashed.—Thou, Lord of life, hast brought
her forth alive !

XLV

Even as the fierce reverberate echoes wane
Away, she fluttereth in her winding-sheet,
Out in an open arc of air again ;
Free as a bird of God.—O blessed street !
O dear, familiar stones, that kiss her feet !—

Already her sweet heart hath homeward flown ;
Already cries, " Why cometh none to greet ? "
The city sleeps. In all the busy town
Naught lives save this dead woman walking here alone.

XLVI

Dark are the squares ; the houses shuttered fast,
Forbidding, huddled, blank, show closèd eyes
Sealed up till dawn. Ginevra, drifting past,
Hath fear ; then swiftlier towards the market hies.
Then pauses. Walls of Agolanti rise
Sheer from their trees ; here blows the orange-bough
Forgot in death ; behind those balconies
The new-made husband weeps and watches now—
Weep too, pale bride, remembering thy marriage-vow.

XLVII

Francesco, in the blank and burnished room,
Now pacing up and down, now pausing under
Lamps that exhaled burnt spices, and perfume
Of purifying herbs and sweet pomander,
Heard a frail cry without ; and half in wonder—
Half scorn at such self-trickery—for a while
Drew the thick stuffs that shut out night, asunder,
And listened ; marvelling, with a bitter smile,
That love and loss could thus so cool a brain beguile.

XLVIII

Contemptuously the figment he dismissed
That such sweet plaintive accents could be real.
Ginevra's lips, uncoloured and unkissed,
Stamped unrepiningly with silence' seal,
Like frozen flowers lie low. O let him veil
Once more with arras-fold the treacherous night,
Stifling her voice lest grief his reason steal ;
Nor know whose hands, loosening their feeble hold,
Drop at his gates without, the binding marriage-gold.

XLIX

Far otherwise Almieri's house of woe
Mourned its one bud, and bitter death reviled.
There, Donna Lisa, rocking to and fro
Like some tormented creature of the wild,
Cried on her lamb—her lily undefiled.
Hour by hour her agonising heart
Laboured in piteous travail of dead child,
Striving to wrest from memories all too short
Of lovely careless days, her dead child's counterpart.

L

Through gulfs of tears her grief etherealised,
On ever mounting yearning flew to meet
Ginevra, whom she deemed enparadised—
Wafted in glory from the judgment seat.

In dream she saw seraphic pinions beat
About such soaring innocence of soul.
And comfort took ;—yet would some sign entreat
From Death, that Prince of mystery and of dole.
And lo ! o'er her wild prayer soft shadowy plainings stole.

LI

"Mother, O Mother, in pity let me in ! "
Half-crazed the mother thought : " O, she is banned
From happiness for a while !—for some small sin
My child must suffer ! "—and with frenzied hand
(As she would force the gates of God's own land)
Flung up—fell on her knees. " O Queen bereaven,
O Mary, Mother, Thou wilt understand !
Rack me with pain so she may be forgiven—
Rock her on these my sobs and cradle her in heaven."

LII

Then that thin voice that ever faintlier cried,
Weeping, she sought to soothe. " Now go in peace,
Sweet ghost of my one babe, my joy, my pride,
For I will never supplication cease
Till thy pure soul find glorious release.
Depart !—thy mother's blessing follow thee
Where'er thou wanderest, and give thee ease."
And silence fell without. Only some tree
With roses beat the doors and fumbled at the key.

LIII

A wind was rising. Like a heart grown cold
The night beat fitfully through its stars dispread;
Anon the shadowy olives shot with gold—
Anon, in drifting white engarmented,
On maiden footstep towards the mountain sped.
In land of hills all endeth with a hill—
There the moon falling lays her weary head,
There the dews gather, and the storm grows still,
Star with star meeteth and their journey's end fulfil.

LIV

To Rondinelli in his vinegrown walls,
O what shall come of comfort ?—All day long
Dead men had listened to his slow footfalls
Pacing beside their coffins :—all day long
The dead did battle with his living wrong,
Beating it down. And now that day was o'er
And towards some hiding-place his soul was stung,
Woe incommensurate met him at the door,
Withering his inmost thought. Ginevra is no more.

LV

So sitteth he alone and stupified,
Weary to death ;—his brain recalcitrant
Letting lost sounds, by daylight set aside,
Its shadowy caves with maddening echoes haunt:—
Jangle of bells, and *Dies-Irae* chant,

Then organ-tunes in his tired ears repeat ;
And over all these voices, palpitant,
The cry of one far lamb, whose hillside bleat
Heard by a grave, seems now against his heart to beat.

LVI

Dimly he wonders if it fell on rest,
Remembering how the shepherd called it home ;
And suddenly his spirit is possessed
With sense of all the helpless things and dumb,
Lost in the night, that must unhousèd roam.
Again the cry—and lo ! his every limb
Grows tense to sounds that near and nearer come ;
Only one voice could thus his hearing brim :
It is—it is Ginevra—and she calleth him !

LVII

All they that hold their dead things in their arms,
Already part of cold eternity ;
Ah ! let them think—if these belovèd forms
Could wake again, and cling, and laugh, and sigh—
Hand twine round hand, and eye respond to eye—
How were they welcome !—what divine relief,
What passion of what wild incredulous joy
Would, in such hour, make paradise of grief,
Heaven of earth, and life a treasure held in fief !

LVIII

Thrice tender is the love whose living rose
The snows of death have purified and kissed ;

Its psalm of joy before the angels goes,
But of its human utterance who hath wist ?
All words fail here. Not the evangelist
When Easter glory from the grave he brings,
Tells how the Mother met her risen Christ.
Only all-choiring heaven sees and sings
How Love clasps Love, and spirit to spirit clings.

LIX

Yet must we tell how Florence, mad with joy,
Set all her belfries pealing to the sky ;
How little children danced, and man and boy
Flung cap in air as for a victory.
For love hath vanquished death, the people cry,
And heaven itself dissolves the marriage vow.
So, in the bishop's palace, by and by,
Grey tonsured heads the lovers' claims allow :
What God hath joined, they say, let no man sunder
now.

LX

Here ends the story. Bishops bless the ring ;
Once more in sunshine bride and bridegroom move ;
The choir entones : *O death, where is thy sting ?*
Not even Agolanti may reprove,
When, in nice terms, that own the might of love,
Surrendering each to each, his lips address them ;
And they two, rich in all those things, whereof
Nor life nor death had power to dispossess them,
Clasp hands before the Lord, while Florence cries :
" God bless them ! "

THE ST. GOTHARD

The St. Gothard

April and I—
Each with each greeting amid tumbled ice,
Travel these wastes of frozen purity.
Here the wild air above the precipice
E'en tasteth sweet, and hath a delicate scent
As of faint flowers unseen—the flower of snows
Massed peak on peak in slumber yet unspent,
But dreaming of the rose.

Here the great hills wear silence as a seal ;—
April and I
Listening can hear the loosened snowflake steal
Down from the burdened bough that slips awry ;
Here the long cry of water-nymphs at play
Freezes upon the icèd lips of fountains,
And their sweet limbs' arrested holiday
In crystal carved engarlandeth the mountains.

Through such vast fields of sleep how dare we
roam,
April and I,
And from its eyrie bid the torrent foam,
And virgin meads grow starrier than the sky
With scattered cowslip and with drifted bell ?
Or where austerely looms an Alpine giant
Set a young almond rosily defiant
To be our sentinel ?

Whence are we victors, chanting as we go,
April and I,
" Be free, ye tumbling streams, awake O snow—
Ye silver blooms, increase and multiply."
What is our spell ?—The singing heart we bring,
And lo ! that song that is the core of earth
Leaps in reply, and children of the Spring
Into the light come forth.

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